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ORIGINAL LETTERS.
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LETTER V.

Dr. PERCY, late Bishop of Dromore, to the Rev. EVAN EVANS *;
dated EASTON MAUDIT, July 21, 1761 †.

SIR,—By my friend Mr. Williams, rector of Weston, Staffordshire, I have been informed of the great attention you have bestowed on British Literature, and the pains you have taken to rescue the productions of your ancient Bards from oblivion. Though I have not the happiness to understand, yet I have a great veneration for, the ancient language of this Island, and have always had a great desire to see some of the most early and most original productions in it. I could never yet obtain a proper gratification of this desire; for, to their shame be it spoken, most of your countrymen, instead of vindicating their ancient and truly venerable mother tongue from that contempt, which is only the result of ignorance, rather encourage it by endeavouring to forget it themselves. Besides my friend Mr. Williams, whose constant residence in England has deprived him of the means of cultivating his native language so much as he would have done, I never met with one native of Wales, who could give me any satisfactory account of the literary productions of his own country, or seemed to have bestowed any attention on its language and antiquities. Not so the Scots:—they are every where recommending the antiquity of their own country to public notice, vindicating its history, and setting off its poetry, and, by dint

* The Rev. Evan Evans was born at Cynhawdref, in Cardiganshire, about the year 1730. He was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, where he entered in 1751. He officiated as Curate at different places for many years, but never obtained any preferment; and died at the place of his nativity in the year 1790. The chief work, by which Mr. Evans is known, is the Specimens of Welsh Poetry with his *Dissertatio de Bardis* subjoined, published in 1764. He is also the author of some other works in Welsh and English. He employed much of his time in transcribing ancient Welsh MSS. and left about a hundred volumes of various sizes, which are now the property of Mr. Panton, of Plas Gwyn, in Anglesey.—ED.

† The sentiments, expressed in this letter, will be found to be particularly congenial with the principles, on which the Cambro-Briton has been undertaken. And the distinguished Writer deserves to live in the grateful remembrance of Wales, for having thus evinced so honourable an exception to that apathy, with which the remains of her ancient literature are too generally regarded by Englishmen.—ED.

of constant attention to their grand national concern, have prevailed so far, as to have the broken jargon they speak to be considered as the most proper language for our pastoral poetry. Our most polite ladies affect to lisp out Scottish airs; and in the Senate itself whatever relates to the Scottish Nation is always mentioned with peculiar respect. Far from blaming this attention in the Scotch, I think it much to their credit, and am sorry, that a large class of our fellow-subjects, with whom we were united in the most intimate union for many ages, before Scotland ceased to be our *most* inveterate enemy, have not shewn the same respect to the peculiarities of their own country. But, by their supineness and neglect, have suffered a foolish and inveterate prejudice to root itself in the minds of their compatriots, the English,—a prejudice which might have been in a good measure prevented, had the Welsh gentlemen occasionally given them specimens of the treasures contained in their native language, which may even yet be in part removed by the same means.

You have translated, I am informed, some of the Odes of your ancient Bards. I wish you would proceed and make a select collection of the best of them, and so give them to the world. You have probably heard what a favourable reception the public has given to an English version of some Erse Fragments imported from the Highlands of Scotland, and, if you have never seen them, I will send them to you. I am verily persuaded, an elegant translation of some curious pieces of ancient British Poetry would be as well received, if executed in the same manner. I may modestly pretend to have some credit with the book-sellers, and with Mr. Dodsley in particular, who is my intimate friend. I shall be very happy to do you any good office with him, and shall be glad to make such an attempt as profitable to you as, I am persuaded, it will be reputable both to you and your country.

I have prevailed on a friend to attempt a Translation of some ancient Runic Odes, composed among the snows of Norway, which will make their appearance at Mr. Dodsley's shop next winter. My very learned friend and neighbour, the Rev. Mr. Lye, editor of Junius's Etymologicon, and of Ulphila's Gothic Gospels, (whose skill in the northern languages has rendered him famous all over Europe) is now rescuing some valuable remains of Saxon Poetry from oblivion, and I can perhaps obtain leave of him to let you see one of these odes by way of specimen, ac-

companied with his version. I have not been altogether idle myself; but my attention has been chiefly bestowed on the languages spoken in the southern parts of Europe. I have collected some curious pieces of ancient Spanish Poetry, and when I have translated a select collection of them, may perhaps, give them to the public. Amidst the general attention of ancient and foreign poetry it would be a pity to leave that of the Ancient Britons forgotten and neglected, and therefore, when I heard that a person so capable was employed in collecting and translating those valuable remains, it gave me a very sensible pleasure, and I could not help expressing, in a *volunteer* letter to you, the sense I entertain of the obligation, which you will undoubtedly confer on all real lovers of literature and the productions of antiquity.

If you will favour me with a line containing a more particular account of what has been the object of your labours, I shall be able to form a more exact idea of the success, that may be expected from them than I can at present. I will also communicate them to several eminent Literati of my acquaintance, and to mention one in particular, Mr. Johnson, the author of the Dictionary, Rambler, &c. who will, I am sure, be glad to recommend your work, and to give you any advice for the most advantageous disposal of it. If you take these voluntary offers of service in good part, you will please to favour me with a line, and I would wish also a specimen of your labours, together with a full direction where to write to you. I am a Clergyman, and shall receive any favour of this kind, that is enclosed under a cover to the Right Honourable Henry Earl of Sussex, at Easton Maudit Castle, by the Ashby Bag, Northamptonshire. I am, Sir, though unknown, your very faithful obedient servant,

THOMAS PERCY.

P. S. I am told you are acquainted with Mr. Gray, the poet. Pray has he any foundation for what he has asserted in his Ode on the British Bards, viz. that there is a tradition among the inhabitants of Wales, that our Edward the First destroyed all the British Bards that fell into his hands? The existence of such a tradition has been doubted *.

* This sanguinary deed is, certainly, not attested by any historian of credit. And it deserves to be also noticed, that none of the numerous bardic productions since the time of Edward make the slightest allusion to the massacre; an omission which could not have happened, if there had been any foundation for the report. It is not improbable, therefore, that, wherever originating, it has been indebted principally for its currency to Gray's celebrated Ode above noticed.—ED.